

the improvised popular play.¹ The persecution in Nerva's time was more popular than political.² In the following century the Christians denounced heathenism as a worship of demons. "It is not surprising that the populace should have been firmly convinced that every great catastrophe that occurred was due to the presence of the enemies of the gods." ³ "The history of the period of the Antonines continually manifests the desire of the populace to persecute, restrained by the humanity of the rulers." ⁴

In the third century the Decian persecution was largely due to the "popular fanaticism caused by great calamities, which were ascribed to the anger of the gods at the neglect of their worship." ⁵

"The most horrible recorded instances of torture were usually inflicted, either by the populace, or in their presence, in the arena."⁶ Frightful tortures were inflicted in the attempt to make Christians sacrifice to the heathen gods. This effort was due to the popular apprehension of solidarity in responsibility for the neglect by the Christians of the state gods, to the decline of all social welfare and the implied insult to the state. In the fourth century Christianity became the religion of the state and took up the task of persecuting the heathen. "The only question is : In whose hands is the power to persecute ? " That question alone determines who shall persecute whom. Literature was produced which uttered savage hatred against all who were not fully orthodox, and the sects practiced violence and cruelty against each other to the full extent for which they found opportunity. "Never, perhaps, was the infliction of mutilation, and prolonged and agonizing forms of death, more common " than in the seventh and eighth centuries.⁷ " Great numbers

were deprived
of their ears and noses, tortured through several
days, and at
last burned alive or broken slowly on the wheel." ⁸ At
Byzantium,
in the ninth century, a prefect of the palace was
burned in the
circus for appropriating the property of a widow. It
became the
custom that capital punishments were executed in
the circus.⁹

¹ Reich, *Der Mimus*, I, 90-96.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 466.

² Lecky, *Morals*, I, 437.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 238.

³ *Ibid.*, 408.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 436.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 455.

⁹ Reich, *Der Mimus*, I,

192.